

CATHOLIC RURAL LIFE CONFERENCE
REGION OF CALIFORNIA
4350 Narvaez Avenue
San Jose, California

Religion

2/28/58

H.R.C.

STATEMENT BEFORE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE ON EXTENSION OF PUBLIC LAW 78.

The Catholic Rural Life Conference has formally stated its opposition to all laws and agreements by which we take "advantage of the desperate poverty of the workers of other nations" to solve the problems of our own sick and maladjusted industry.

Copies of these Policy Statements are herewith presented to this Committee: Sioux Falls 1956; Grand Rapids 1957.

My name is Thomas McCullough. I am a Catholic Priest of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco and a Local Director of the C.R.L.C. For ten years my appointment has been with the agricultural workers of the San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties. In this time I was charged with the care of eight (8) Family Settlements of citizen agricultural workers and 180 Labor Camps of field workers with an average yearly population of 15,000 Mexican Nationals.

I wish by this statement to call the attention of the United States Government to one very distressing development in the use of Public Law 78 as felt by the working people of San Joaquin County.

Notwithstanding grave unemployment there are over 500 imported workers in this area today. By the first week of March there will be more than 1,000 and at least 2,000 by the end of March.

The records of the State Farm Placement Service indicate that in the year 1956 the employment of Mexican Nationals in the San Joaquin County Area never fell below 2,217 for 34 consecutive weeks. They further show that 8 of the remaining 12 work weeks (the year was divided into 48 work weeks or 2 15-day periods per month) saw at least 1,000 imported workers, leaving only four weeks with less than a 1,000 such workers.

What statistics I have been able to obtain for 1957 do not give these specifics. However, from my own count and the information in the Annual Report of Region X for 1957, I am certain last year was very near the same as 1956 with the exception that the peaks may not have been so high.

And sadly enough, there is every indication that 1958 will witness a continuation of the same situation.

But can we not hope that the Congress of United States will concur that the continuous employment of 2,000 imported workers for 9 months should represent job opportunities with employment security for 2,000 residents of this county.

With the exception of the efforts of the Farm Placement Service, limited seriously by budget and purpose, no effort has been made to "attract domestic workers" for these jobs. The Law (PL-78) demands "reasonable efforts". I have witnessed no effort on the part of the grower associations of this area even to advertise the existence of these jobs let alone the inclination to mitigate the demeaning circumstances, altogether accidental and unnecessary, which downgrade this labor and make it repellent to U.S. working men. Agricultural management of this area has placed its demands with the Farm Placement Office and done no more.

This is but one very serious situation contrary to the purpose and spirit of this law, but none the less permitted by the ambiguity of its terms.

There must be further instructions as to the administration of Section 503 of Public Law 78 to prevent these abuses while the Law remains in existence.

We must look to completely new legislation for the agricultural labor problem upon the termination of this Law.

Signed _____

Thomas McCullough